

# TOPICS OF THE STAGE AS VIEWED IN WASHINGTON

## Stage Progress.

### How Theatrical Art Has Been Advanced in the Last Ten Years by Three Material Changes.

Every generation lives through changes which it only half realizes. This is particularly true of the theater. Great actors appear and act their best parts, new plays take their station in the world's dramatic literature, valuable improvements supplant primitive schemes of investiture, and all are accepted indifferently. It would be a fine thing for the average playgoer if he could stop short, some day, and ask himself: "How has the theater improved in the past ten years?" He would be surprised at his conclusions.

The three most conspicuous material advances have been made in the personnel of the acting body, the investiture which surrounds that body, and the commercial enterprise which maintains it. In one short article it is impossible to treat these three movements thoroughly, or any one of them; but it may open the eyes of Times readers to have them indicated.

In the old days—a phrase intended to describe our stage from the day of the first American performance to the retirement of Edwin Booth—actors were enlisted chiefly from the ranks of "theatrical people." This classification included then a heterogeneous mass. First came the actors themselves—one-third of them intellectual and serious, one-third of them struggling and uneducated, and one-third of them day laborers who acted for a living. But actors did not represent all the "theatrical people," by any means. Their number was about doubled by the stage carpenters, electricians, costumers, advance men (not the intelligent press representatives of today, by any means), wardrobe mistresses, scene painters, scene shifters, ushers, transfer agents, and managers. The occasional actor who slipped onto the stage from any other walk of life only serves to emphasize the general truth that until a few years ago the rank and file was enlisted almost exclusively from these "theatrical people."

#### Enlisted From a New People.

Such a condition produced good and bad results. It is necessary here to go into that question. It is enough if we admit that a training which began at the cradle led to clear reading, a certain patterned skill which suited a given means to a given result, and a general untheatrical personality which precluded much genuine service to theatrical art like that which the student in painting or sculpture gives to graphic art.

This is believed to be a fair estimate of the stage which enlisted its votaries from the ranks of "theatrical people" almost entirely. It produced Hallam, Lester Wallack, E. L. Davenport, Wilson Barrett, Lawrence Barrett, Charlotte Cushman, Joseph Jefferson, the two Sotherns, Ada Rehan, Edwin Booth, and Henry Irving, and so it could not be all bad. But we must not forget that it produced also thousands of actors who were as mechanical and wooden as the figures on a weather-vane.

Today this is much changed. No more does the average actor toddle on the stage in baby clothes. Today he spends his childhood in school, more or less, and otherwise he goes to college, and when he does enter upon acting it is as a legitimate profession to which he brings a man's mind, a student's intelligence, and the breeding of a man of the world. These sound, no doubt, like general phrases; but they are more specifically true than anyone would suspect who is not a careful student of the drama. The companies which give the stage its tone are the companies which obtain the \$1, \$50 or \$100 patronage, and in every such company the number of young actors who are not below the level of this new class can be counted on the fingers of one hand. The movement is yet too transitional to have supplanted altogether the actor of the old school. You will find him in good companies playing such roles as the old man, the conventional vicar, or the servant who announces my lord's carriage. Otherwise he is relegated to the melodrama or worse.

#### Investiture Has Leaped Forward.

The mounting of the plays in which these new actors appear is a vast progress over that of the plays entrusted to their end-of-the-century predecessors. The number of costumes used has been multiplied by a count; there are almost as many more costumes; both costume making and scene painting have been advanced to the plane of auxiliary arts; electric lighting has contributed a vast deal of new effects; the making of papier-mâché has become possible; the display of numberless ornaments, built into the scenes and safe from damage, which contribute greatly to the beauty and naturalness of the picture; and the system of setting an interior by means of parallel slides for the side walls has—having been praised—been largely superseded by the present use of "built" or solid sides.

So much is a question of widened opportunity. The modern manager has now these advantages which his predecessor did not have and which many even of our latter-day promoters did without when their service was young. It ought not to be necessary to speak of the more lavish spirit which now marks the mounting of plays. Ten years ago \$1,000 would "float" almost any kind of a comedy. Today ten times that sum is almost invariably spent, \$20,000 is an entirely usual outlay, and \$30,000 creates no stir at all.

Figures like these suggest a powerful backing. The stage has it. There are few business enterprises which touch many cities and employ many men on their own responsibility which are half so well organized financially. Every day, like the stage, shows the attendance at thousands of performances worm their way to the central offices in New York. Every day the central management, no matter how many enterprises it controls, knows the support given each of its companies. Every railroad rate, every percentage agreement with the house managers, every contract with the baggage agent, every expenditure for advertising, in short, every outlay for every purpose is noted, transmitted, recorded.

#### Even Commercialism Has Advantages.

What is the consequence? The answer can be made in one word—commercialism. But it is a commercialism which has much benefited the actor. While



MARGARET DALE, Leading Woman in "The Second in Command."

such business methods prevail his salary and expenses are sure. There is more basis in old stories of the stage for the joke "walking back home" than actors like to admit. It is not so long ago that poor business also meant poor pay. But today if the management is not practically outlawed, the contract between the actor and his employer is as good as any contract made, and the "business" done by the company does not affect it.

This is one benefit produced by commercialism. Some of the others are uniform railroad rates for all companies, a decrease in the amount of billboard posting, better hotel accommodations, in consequence of regular wages, and a reduction of the terrors of theater travel by about one-half.

It may be this will sound like a defense of the present syndicate control of American theaters. It is, in fact, nothing of the sort. It would be hard to see how any man who is sincerely interested in theatrical art could either defend or endorse the present commercial methods of the few men who control our stage. It operates to throttle individual enterprise. It makes the artist subservient to the money-changer, it fosters a brood of cheap, inartistic, and unworthy plays and it levies a preposterous tribute on the builder of every playhouse in the country. Yet, bad as it is, it has produced this one good result—it has raised the stage from a posture of the weakest financial footing to one of firm financial confidence.

These, then, are some of the material changes which have occurred on the American stage within the past ten years. They are accompanied by artistic changes as well, but there is no space to treat them here. We have considered enough to make the most thoughtful of us sit up and take notice.

A. D. A.

#### Past and Future

Hubert Henry Davies and Ethel Barrymore gave patrons of the National last week one of the most genuine pleasures of the season. Many plays are well acted; some are well written, and some are both. But the number of plays which are well acted, well written, and pleasing besides is infinitesimal. To this notable class belongs Miss Barrymore's production of "Cousin Kate," and it was fine to note how speedily that estimate spread about the city and filled the theater.

In the review published in the Times of Tuesday it was said that Miss Barrymore's art had expanded. This was not intended to indicate that her art had matured. This actress, pleasing and skillful as she is, has yet a great way to go before she reaches the plane occupied by her uncle, John Drew, for example. The technique of the stage is as essential to the actress as the technique of painting is essential to the painter; and neither can be acquired by heredity or instinct. Miss Barrymore's acting has improved in the sense that her knowledge of technique has widened—that is all. Unless the horizon continues to extend and extend, she will remain all her life an actress of personality rather than art.

This would be lamentable, in view of the promise Miss Barrymore now offers. With her fine sense of appropriateness, her extreme delicacy, the intuition with which she suits the actor to the word, the stage would be more the loser than the actress if she did not develop into one of its most prominent art figures. At present the greatest danger before her seems to be that she will confirm by much use certain favorite gestures and inflections of the voice until they have become mannerisms. "Glittering Gloria" proved unexpectedly entertaining. More forces set to music and less comic opera of the "Silver Slipper" stamp would please playgoers, managers, and critics all three—and what a consummation that would be, to be sure.

"My Aunt Bridget," polite vaudeville and occasional glimpses of spring dived what interest remained. From this time on spring will take the lion's share. Yet this season, as always, theaters will offer some of their strongest attractions after the furnace have been allowed to cool and the fashionable golf club has divided the masculine mind with the baseball bat of the masses.

As a sample of spring bargains the emporiums of theatrical art announce for next week John Drew in one of the

best plays he has ever done; a comic opera which has enjoyed wide popularity and which permits of the entertaining comparison of Jefferson De Angelis with Francis Wilson; a good minstrel show and good vaudeville, and the usual staple goods. How can such chances be neglected? It is worth while to reflect at this time that whatever happens to the other playhouses, the Academy, the Empire, and the Lyceum will go on blithely playing to large audiences.

It is only real art which suffers from the weather.

#### At the Theaters.

##### National—John Drew.

John Drew, whose position as an actor has never been questioned since he became the leading man of the late Augustin Daly's company, nearly two decades ago, comes to the New National Theater Monday, April 4, armed with a comedy which has never yet met with an adverse criticism. The play is entitled "The Second in Command," and it not only gives to Mr. Drew splendid opportunities for exhibiting his best talents, but also gives chances for the exceptionally good support, with which he is surrounded, to make the play a success.

His career is as brilliant as it is long. Not since he first trod the boards more than thirty years ago, has his name been identified with a far more famous name. He was born in Philadelphia in 1872. He comes from a family the members of which had distinguished themselves on the English and American stages. His first appearance was made March 22, 1892, when he enacted the role of Plummer, in Charles Mathers' farce, "Cool as a Cucumber." This was in the old Arch Street Theater, Philadelphia, which was owned and managed at that time by his mother, Mrs. John Drew, who, in her generation, was one of our most gifted actresses-managers.

"The Second in Command" was written by that highly successful playwright, Robert Marshall, author of "Annie Russell," "A Royal Family," "His Excellency," the Governor, and other plays. Mr. Drew's company contains several well-known players. In the cast are Charles F. Gotthold, O'Kane Hillis, Robert Schable, Sidney Herbert, Margaret Dale, Ethel Hornick, and Constance Bell.

##### Columbia—De Angelis in "The Toreador."

At the Columbia Sam S. Shubert and Nixon & Zimmerman will present the Jefferson De Angelis Opera Company, in "The Toreador," introducing Jefferson De Angelis in his latest creation, that of Sammy Gigg. "The Toreador" is said to be one of the most extensive and elaborate productions of musical comedy ever made in this country. The comedy was written by six authors and composers, all of whom have been identified with such London musical successes as "The Country Girl" and "San Toy." James Tanner and Harry Nichols wrote the book, Adrian Ross and Percy Greenbank the lyrics, and Ivan Caryll and Lionel Monckton the music, and in book and lyrics "The Toreador," as well as in its dashing and genial music, is regarded the most brilliant of all the Gigg hits.

Mr. De Angelis has in the part of Sammy Gigg, distinctly the best role he has ever played. It gives him wide scope to display his versatility, and to introduce that peculiar style of grotesque stage humor for which he is celebrated. As Sammy Gigg Mr. De Angelis depicts a timid English "tiger," who, in a series of comical situations and complications continually finds himself in hot water, being mistaken for a bull-fighter and coming very near facing six wild Texan steers in the arena, and to lead a Carlist revolution. The company numbers nearly seventy-five people, and is said to be exceptionally strong, both in its cast and its splendid chorus of well-trained voices.

##### Lafayette—Haverly's Minstrels.

Haverly's Mastodon Minstrels are announced for the Lafayette for the ensuing week. Will Nankerville is now director general of the famous organization, and he presents as his star and principal comedian this season Billy Van, the minstrel man, "the assassin of sorrow," a name familiar wherever minstrelsy is known, and has furnished him the following assistants in fun making: Eddie Leonard, Dan Waldron, Eddie Masler, Jesse Young, Fred Gifford, Gene Marcell, Frank Young, George Gardlen, Horace Greeley, George Josephs, and Perron Somers.



JOHN DREW, Starring in "The Second in Command."

The first part setting represents the interior of a huge watermelon, with the company in true minstrel attire.

The Haverly choir includes Franklyn A. Batie, William A. Daly, George M. Vall, Frank Coombs, William Moore, Samuel Nankerville, Karl McMillin, and Carol Ames, all being young, with fresh, well cultivated voices.

The orchestra will be directed by Frank Fuhrer, a violin virtuoso from the famous Boston Symphony Orchestra. The olio will be made up of exclusively legitimate minstrel acts, the good old-fashioned, black-face minstrel traditions being rigidly followed.

##### Chase's—Polite Vaudeville.

The Chase bill this week will have at its head the Fratelli Riccoboni's troupe of performing horses and dogs, in which the pre-eminent feature is the wonderful "good night" horse which dresses, undresses, arranges its bed, and retires to slumber, unaided and undisturbed. It was the special attraction with the Barnum & Bailey Old World troupe. The four Lukens are announced by the management as the greatest acrobats of the day. Eva Mudge, the military maid, a petite and graceful girl, will offer her character changes. Mr. and Mrs. Mark Murphy, in their new Irish farce, "Why I'm a Soldier," will be followed by Duffy, and Little Master Duffy. Jennie Yeamans, the youngest of the famous Yeamans' family; Martinetti and Grossi, European novelty artists, and motion pictures of a train robbery complete the bill.

##### Academy—"A Desperate Chance."

At the Academy next Monday Theodore Kremer's latest melodrama, "A Desperate Chance," will be presented. Mr. Kremer has taken for the foundation of his story the incidents surrounding the Blidde brothers, who, but simply characters or types. Special scenery is carried by the company.

##### Empire—"The Fast Mail."

"The Fast Mail" will be seen at the Empire all this week. The climaxes are described as startling in the extreme and well wrought. The second act presents a Mississippi steamer, which, through a deed of villainy, is blown up by a boiler explosion. One of the most realistic pieces of mechanism is a full-sized locomotive attached to a train of freight cars, on the roofs of which may be seen brakemen riding, while the locomotive under full steam hauls the long freight out of the station. Niagara Falls by moonlight is a setting worthy of special mention.

##### Lyceum—Irwin's Majestics.

"Fred Irwin's New Majestics" will appear at the Lyceum this week. The program will include two burlesques, "When I Was King" and "King Do Do," each in two acts, and an olio featuring the "Two American Maes," the Musical Craigs, Harvey and Walker, Carey and Hayes, Marie Barrison, and Farron and Fay.

##### Richard Strauss Coming.

Eminent Composer to Accompany His Wife in Concert Program.

Poignant and dramatic as is the tale of "Enoch Arden," it is made infinitely more so by the tone-poem given it as a frame by Dr. Strauss. The composer feels deeply its pathos. He is also strong in his feeling upon the connection between words and music in its performance. It is a great compliment to Sydney Lloyd Wrightson, the singer and scholar, that he has been invited by the Strausses to recite this classic in a few weeks, here in Washington. With the accompaniment of the composer himself.

"Enoch Arden" will form part of the concert-recital of Strauss compositions to be given at the National Theater April 23, 4:30 p. m. Mrs. Strauss will also sing her husband's songs with his accompaniment. A rare treat may be expected.

Dr. Strauss is very proud of his wife's abilities as delineator of his fancies. He often tells with one of his rare smiles, of her success on the stage as a lyric artist, especially with the role of Elizabeth.

The doctor is tall, slender, stooping a trifle in the shoulders, though yet young, of rather warm blood this, reflective brown eyes, thin face, coming to a point to the chin, and grave mouth

under a light mustache. There is no danger of anybody's stealing the hat or the Doctor during his visit, as it falls below the ears of even a large headed man. His singularly quiet in manner. The couple have a little boy in school in Germany. The composer wears the wedding ring for the family, saying drily, that the wife does not need it.

The Washington concert will be given under the auspices of the Morgantown College of Music, of which Mr. Wrightson is director. Tickets will be for sale until April 25, at Knabe's music house, F Street. On Thursday of last week the Strausses gave a concert at Milwaukee, with Mr. Wrightson. The musicians sail for home on April 25, days after the Washington appearance.

#### Ethel Barrymore's Book.

A Remarkable Subject Treated by an Authority.

It is known that Ethel Barrymore has written at least one play—which has not, however, been produced—and now comes the announcement, made by herself, that she is going to write a book. Some one—we forget at this moment whether it was Cadmus or just one of the officials of the Jockey Club—once made a long-winded complaint, the effect that "of the making of books there is no end." Not having had the good luck to be born in Indiana, but hailing instead from Philadelphia, Miss Barrymore labors under some disadvantage. But not every one can be born in Indiana. Inquired Miss Barrymore, "Did he say that I used to sit upon his knee?" Inquired Miss Barrymore, "Did he say that I used to sit upon his knee?" "No, I don't think he did," said the puzzled friend.

"I'm very glad of that," said the star, with a sigh of relief. "You see," she went on to explain, "so many of the distinguished old actors have told me of the days when I was a child and sat upon their knees that I have been thinking of writing a history of the stage and calling it 'Knees I Have Sat Upon.'"

#### Miss Blair's Engagement.

Emotional Actress to Produce Several Plays at Lafayette.

Eugene Blair, supported by a strong company, will commence a spring engagement of several weeks at the Lafayette Square Theater, Wednesday afternoon, April 13. The bill will be "Camille" for the opening week, and the first performance is to be a matinee owing to the theater having been engaged on Monday evening by the Mack and Wig Club and on Tuesday by Mrs. Barney for her society entertainment, "The Dream of Queen Elizabeth."

Miss Blair appeared in this city in "Camille" part of one week a few months ago and the demand for seats was so great that Manager La Motte could not accommodate his patrons. At the time he endeavored to arrange with Mr. Gressitt, Miss Blair's manager, for a return engagement in "Camille." Later it was found practicable to bring Miss Blair here for a continued engagement.

The entire repertoire is as yet not fully decided, but "Sapho" has been chosen to follow "Camille." As many persons did not see Olga Nethersole in this widely discussed play, Miss Blair's interpretation of it will be awaited with much interest and curiosity. The other plays to be presented will be such as will give the star an opportunity to display her powers in emotional roles.

#### Jefferson "Had Retired."

Joseph Jefferson is sensitive on the subject of his retirement from the stage. He has been before the footlights since a small child, and he has never shown any desire to leave it. The interviewer who puts the question of farewells to him gets a rather sharp but pleasant



JEFFERSON DE ANGELIS as the Fighting Tiger in "The Toreador."

reply, but a reporter in Chicago last season got the best of him. Mr. Jefferson came down stairs at the hotel one morning and was much disturbed to find a mysteriously worded article in which the word retired was closely connected with his name. He knew the managing editor and made a half-hearted complaint. The reporter was called in and asked where he got the story.

"The city editor told me to see Mr. Jefferson," said the young man, "and ask him if he was going to retire." "Well, did you see him?" said the editor.

"No, sir," said the reporter. "I sent my card to his room and it was sent back with this written on it: 'Mr. Jefferson has retired.'"

"Then the actor who sleeps twenty years in every performance took the reporter out and bought him a five-dollar hat."

#### Why Art Thou "Mudge?"

So Sings a Disconsolate Critic to the Youthful Eva.

When Eva Mudge, who is in the Chase bill this week, was in San Francisco the dramatic editor of the "Call" thought enough of the little artist to give her a special tribute from his own pen, from which the following is culled: "The burning question of the week in upper dramatic circles has been whether or not Eva Mudge, the 'lightning change artist' at the Orpheum, is twins. (The grammar of this sounds doubtful, but I happen to know that she isn't twins.) I can hardly be expected to subscribe to a syntax that would imply Miss Mudge's plural existence." Her soft, smugly little name interested me in Miss Eva long before I had seen her ingenious 'turn.' I wondered where she got it, what odd freak of feminine humor had led to its choice, for it is vastly unlike the 'Fleur-de-lis' and 'Montenapoli' that blossom so freely in the vaudeville garden. I was almost disappointed to find that she comes by it honestly, that the humorists were the good Mudies, her parents, and that their only daughter has her quality of inheritance. In my disappointment I even dropped into rhyme, for which, under the dire provocation, I hope to be forgiven:

"O Eve, why art thou 'Mudge?'  
I dreamed thee 'Vere de Vere.'  
I dreamed thee 'Vere de Vere.'  
When Mudge fell on my ear,  
But thus doth fate beguile me,  
The scanty laughter here,  
O Eve, why art thou 'Mudge?'  
I dreamed thee 'Vere de Vere.'  
I thought 'O hasty judge!'  
An attic jester need to say,  
The female wit—all fudge?

Well, you are right, I fear,  
O Eve, why art thou 'Mudge?'  
I dreamed thee 'Vere de Vere.'  
But, nevertheless, Miss Mudge is a very charming little person, and her sure is the cleverest of its kind that has come within my ken. She sings, in a quite untrained, but pleasing contralto voice, a patriotic ditty, illustrated by four complete changes of costume. It is the lightning-like rapidity of the changes that constitutes the chief wonder of the turn, and that has given rise to the rumor that Miss Mudge is twins.

"Of course, there is a mystery, and little Miss Mudge brought me not to give it away, for she said, quaintly: 'If people know how it is done, why, it will not be a wonder any more.'"

"I almost crossed my heart to die that I would not tell, driven thereto by the appealing blue eyes of the young lady, but a stern duty to my paper forbade, and here, with humble apologies to her, is the secret. There is a fairy godmother in the case, two of them, in fact. They stand in the wings, and as soon as Miss Mudge leaves the stage they wave their wands and the air is full of flying garments. Coats fly off and gowns fly on faster than eye can see. A cap drops from nowhere and perches itself on the Mudge curls, shoes attach themselves to the Mudge feet seemingly of their own accord, and presto! prestissimo! there you are! Nothing is a mystery when you know how it is done.

"But the godmothers are of duty on the stage. At her ordinary dressing Miss Mudge lingers and fusses and dawdles just like the average girl. She is much more like the average girl in everything, by the way, than the usual vaudeville. Her father and mother travel with her wherever she goes, and

it is a case of indulging an only child in the vaudeville whim, as other only children are indulged in other hobbies. She has been on the stage since she was five years old—not so very long ago—in dancing turns, in the 'legitimate,' in everything except grand opera, and hopes some day to be a comic opera star. All this while the face and ways of a sweet, wholesome little school girl. She is ever so clever and particularly nice."

#### Straining a Pint.

Why Jefferson De Angelis Has Suffered All His Life.

Jefferson De Angelis was in a confidential mood last night. He was seen looking at a cartoon of J. Pierpont Morgan as a buccaneer and the sight affected him strangely. "I might have been in that man's shoes at this minute," he said, sadly, as he wiped away a tear, "had it not been for an affair in life which blighted my prospects and made me what I am now."

"Oh, Mr. De Angelis, don't tell me that you are the hero of a love episode," gurgled the pretty young girl to whom he was talking.

"Yes, child," he sighed, "this is a love story which points a moral to you, especially as one fails to take liberties with the English language. You can never tell what a word may do. A word may make or a word may mar."

"I know from experience. Years ago I loved a beautiful girl; her father was a millionaire who got his start in the milk business, and I had reason to believe that she regarded me with favor. One evening I called on her with the purpose of asking her to be mine. We sat in a sumptuously furnished parlor holding hands, and at last, when I could control my feelings no longer I told her what was in my heart. She put her soft cheeks up against mine and, throwing her arms around my neck, cried out: 'I love you, Jeff, but we don't belong to the same church.'"

"Darling," I said, 'don't let that bother you. Can't you strain a pint and let me—'

"But she never gave me a chance to finish; she turned on me angrily and ordered me out of the house. My letters to her were returned unopened. I tried to telephone her, but she always rang me off. Finally she got married to another man, and when it was too late, I succeeded in getting a chance one day in asking her for an explanation."

"Do you recall what you said?" she asked me.

"As well as if it had been said last night," I answered her. "I asked if you couldn't strain a pint and let me—"

"Oh, heavens!" she wailed, "I thought you said strain a pint, and that you were making an insinuating reference to the way my father had become rich."

"So you see how a little word wrecked her happiness and mine. I made it necessary for me to keep on singing and putting nonsense on my face in trying to be funny in comic opera and at the same time eke out a miserable existence. It's awful."

Mr. De Angelis' press agent says the foregoing is absolutely true.

#### Mask and Wig Club.

Will Produce "Alice in Anotherland" for Diet Kitchen.

The sixteenth annual production of the famous Mask and Wig Club will be presented at the Washington National Theater, April 11, at the Lafayette Opera House, the vehicle to popular favor being a "musical nondescript" entitled "Alice in Anotherland." The Mask and Wig Club, a most everyone in Washington knows, is composed of students at the University of Pennsylvania. More than one hundred of these students will take part in the production, which opens in Philadelphia next Monday evening and runs during the entire Easter week. For the Washington performance a long list of actresses has been obtained, including many ladies of the diplomatic, official, and Congressional circles, boxes already at a premium, and the show promises to be, as usual, a social success.

"Alice in Anotherland" is to be the most pretentious and elaborate production the Mask and Wig Club has ever undertaken—a breezy, colorful, melodramatic, and spectacular parody on the well-known "Alice in Wonderland." It